

August 30 1973

Smog is so thick here in Houston that I am going to trade my sun glasses for a bottle of vitamin C pills. These people sure don't have to look for shade. The sun can't begin to penetrate the overhanging atmosphere.

Traffic is as bad as the pollution. Down toward the Gulf, cars are so thick that television cameras are being used to run the stop lights going onto the freeway. When there's space, the drivers are signalled to enter the race. Country boys and cowards, I suppose are towed away to safer grounds.

Yesterday I copiloted a pickup on the interstate coming in from the west. Diesels and Mustangs were guarding the exits. Volkswagens and dump trucks were bringing up the drags. Interlocked bumpers were holding the point. A race car driver couldn't have broke from the herd.

Our choices ranged from being run over here to taking a wrong turn and being run over in, say, Miami, Fla. My son was doing the driving and I was doing the flinching.

Heat waves jellied the asphalt. Truck drivers blew diesel smoke on the windshield. The pickup was buckling so bad that I opened four anti-acid pills before I got one in my mouth.

Streams of vehicles were stampeding for the exits. The only use for a road map was to cover my face. I thought the circulation had stopped in my right hand until I noticed what a grip I had on the arm rest.

About the time the situation change from desperate to hopeless, an old boy and his wife passed on the right flank eating bananas.

In my time, I've known gluttonous people. I've seen cowboys who could roundup a bunkhouse table while the cook was dumping the last biscuit from the pan. I've witnessed Boy Scouts working at mess hall tables and football players rushing their training tables. I once saw one of those old long legged water birds swallow a four pound bass whole, but I'd never seen anyone or anything that could eat bananas on an open freeway.

It finished turning my stomach. People should have more respect than to go down a magnificent tax supported highway eating a fruit as common as a banana. Matadors don't go in the ring eating a fried pie or a cold biscuit. Lion tamers don't crawl into the cages chewing on a cinnamon roll or lapping up a Hershey bar.

Tough-stomached baboons wouldn't be able to eat on one of those death inviting raceways. Monkeys, I've heard, lose their appetites on long ocean voyages. It looks like city folks should at least be delicately attuned as a monkey.

This morning I spoke to a fellow putting circulars on the doors and windshields. He gave me a scowl that would startle a marriage counselor.

I started to tell this hombre where he could go the first lap before he went to a hotter place, but I got to thinking that if these people are able to live without sunshine and air, they might make you wish you'd had your mouth sewed up when you were a kid.

I hope that banana-eating car jockey doesn't move to the Shortgrass Country. I'd as soon the freaks stay in the cities.

I understand now why the consumers are so fierce. It'd ruin anyone's disposition to live in a place like this.